

## "LIES HAVE SHORT LEGS":

### RANKING HONESTY ACROSS GENDER AND OBLIGATION TOWARD RELIGION

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#### **Abstract**

We examine the effect of behavioral codes and social norms on the degree of honesty by conducting an under-the-cup die experiment. We offer monetary payoffs to participants in secular and religious colleges based on reported outcomes of throwing a fair die. As these payoffs increase with reported number, participants have strong incentive to lie (regardless of the true outcome) and report the highest number ("six"). On the other hand, real monetary value of this incentive is expected to decrease with participant's level of wealth. Paradoxically, while self-ranking of participant's wealth drops with more stringent obedience toward religious commands, the level of honesty increases. Our research findings thus stress the positive role of behavioral codes and norms of truth-telling on the degree of honesty.

**Key Words:** honesty, religion

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